

Christ in Prophecy

Easter 6: A Garden Tomb Sermon

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: This week Christendom worldwide is celebrating what is usually referred to as Easter. I don't like that word, I don't like it because it has pagan roots, and it's not a biblical term. I refer to Easter Sunday as Resurrection Day. It is a day dedicated to celebrating one of the greatest miracles in history the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The Resurrection was the focus of the Apostle's teaching and preaching in the First Century. And that's because the Resurrection validated Jesus as who He said He was, namely, God in the flesh. For a sermon concerning the Resurrection, delivered from Jerusalem where the Resurrection took place, stay tuned.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy! I have had the blessing of going to the Holy Land more than 45 times, and my favorite place in all that land is the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem. It is a beautiful, quiet, and meditative place. It may not be the exact location of the tomb of Jesus, but the site meets all the qualifications. It is a First Century rich man's tomb with a rolling stone. It is located inside a magnificent garden. And a place of execution is located nearby, called Skull Hill. On the modern day door to the tomb is a sign that says: "He is not here - For He is risen." Another sign close by reads: "Jesus Christ declared with power to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead." Which is a quote from Romans 1, verse 4. To say the least, it is the perfect setting for a sermon about the Resurrection of Jesus. In just a moment we will go to the Garden Tomb to view a sermon that I delivered there. But first, let's take a closer look at this remarkable place where the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus could have taken place.

Visual Tour of Tomb

Don Gordon: Ancient history's greatest fact, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The Bible says that in the place where Christ was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb where no one was ever laid before. Here in this lovely garden outside Jerusalem's city walls the very heart of the Christian message is proclaimed. Jerusalem home to the three great monotheistic faiths; the city where the Creator of the universe executed His plan to redeem fallen man. The Holy Sepulcher is traditionally the chief site of Christian pilgrimage. But many after visiting wander away without being made aware that Christ came into the world to save sinners. Scripture says, Christ suffered outside the gate and that history's greatest sacrificial death took place at Golgotha the place of the skull. There as the people passed by Jesus bore the wrath of God to take away the punishment that must be paid for our sin. The Gospels record that a rich religious leader, Joseph of Arimathea, took the Lord's body down from the cross, laying it in his own tomb, and that this tomb was in the garden nearby. In this acre of land, we find two pre-Christian artifacts that attest to a working garden from the first Century. Jerusalem's third largest water cistern cut out of solid rock, and a very large winepress,

evidence of wealth. And just yards away, a tomb that matches the Bible's description in every way hewn from the rock with a great stone to seal the doorway. Inside is a large weeping chamber, and the place where the body was laid is visible from outside, just as the Bible describes. We cannot be absolute and say that this is the tomb where Jesus was laid. Joseph never left his mark on it, but others did. Christians have been present here perhaps from the very dawn of the faith. But it's more about who is not here. The raising of Jesus from the dead is the greatest miracle in all history, for it is His resurrection from the dead, as Romans 1:4 declares, that is proof that Jesus was who He said He was, the Son of God. That's the core of our proclamation. Jesus is alive, after all, no resurrection; no Christianity.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: Well, as you can see, the Garden Tomb is a very, very beautiful and spiritually impressive site on the north side of the Old City of Jerusalem. And now that you have the site of the Garden Tomb clearly in mind, let's go there for a sermon about the Resurrection of Jesus in symbolic prophecy.

Garden Tomb Sermon

Dr. Reagan: Hebrews chapter 1. I was reading through the New Testament many years ago. I got to Hebrews chapter 1 and I was looking forward to it because this is one of my favorite Scriptures in all the Bible. It talks about the superiority of Jesus above the angels, and Moses, and everything else. And I love how it ends in verse 14 where it says that there are ministering angels who are ministering to those who are in the process of being saved. And I have depended on those angels many times. I ask the Lord to post one at my house every time I leave on a trip like this to watch over my family. I ask Him to surround that airplane when we are flying over that big ocean. So, if you've never used the ministry of angels I suggest you start doing so.

When I got to verse 1 which is not a full sentence and look at what it says, "God who at various times, and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets." And I started to go to verse 2 and the Holy Spirit said, "Stop." I don't know if you've had those experiences. I'm sure you've had if you read the Scriptures often it is called Rhema. Rhema is where the Holy Spirit speaks to you from the Scripture to give you a special message. You might read a verse 101 times and it never say anything to you, but, the 102nd time it will jump off the page, grab you by the throat, shake you until your teeth rattle because you have a need in your life that never was there before that that Scripture is going to speak to. And that's what happened that day. I said, "Well, Lord that's not even a full sentence." "Read it again." So I read it again. "God who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets." So I got to thinking about that. And I thought well I'll go over to the Old Testament and I'll take a look and I'll see what are the various ways that God spoke through the prophets. And it didn't take me long to make a list of them and I'm sure you could too.

The very first thing that I thought of was the most obvious, the writing prophets. The Old Testament is full of writing prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, the Major Prophets, the Minor Prophets. David in the Psalms many times spoke prophetically full of prophecy even prophecies in the histories that we have. So, I began to think about the writing prophets. And then I began to think it says various ways, and various people and then I got to thinking about the great variety of people, from a king like David to a sophisticated, erudite,

educated man like Isaiah. To a man like Amos who was a fig picker from Tekoa. Brave men like Daniel. Cowards like Jonah. There were all kinds of people that He used. It depended upon whether their heart was searching for Him or not whether He could use them.

And then I got to thinking well, what was there beside the writing prophets? And it occurred to me that the Bible is full of oral prophets. These were prophets that never wrote anything, people wrote about them. Oral prophets like Elijah, and Elisha they didn't write anything but people wrote about them. Or the Old Testament is full of oral prophets. I went through one time making a list of the old oral prophets and I was just overwhelmed many of them are not even named, they are referred to as the old prophet, the young prophet something like that. One of my favorites is Micaiah a prophet many have not usually heard of but there was a time when Ahab and Jehoshaphat an ungodly, and godly king were going to go out to battle together against the common enemy. And Jehoshaphat said, "Before I go into battle I always have the prophets come and tell us whether we should go or not." And Ahab said, "Ah, you know the prophets I don't care anything about the prophets." He said, "I've got 400 of them, and all they ever do is come to tell me what I want to hear." He said, "There is only one who will tell me what I don't want to hear and I don't like him." Jehoshaphat said, "Ok, let's get him." And he was Micaiah. And Micaiah came in and he said, and he revealed something that was very amazing he said, "I saw the Lord in His throne room." Very few people were ever given that opportunity. Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up. Micaiah saw the Lord. And he said, "And I say to you if you go to battle tomorrow you are going to be defeated." And Ahab turned to Jehoshaphat said, "See, I told you he always tells me things I don't want to hear." Well you've got the writing prophet. You've got the oral prophets. And in fact in the New Testament you have oral prophets. Philip had four daughters who were prophets. Agabus confronted Paul at the end of his third missionary journey and wrapped a rope around him and said, "Don't go to Jerusalem if you do you will end up in bondage." And he said, "I'm going anyway." And the greatest prophet who ever lived of course John the Baptist was an oral prophet. And the greatest prophet who ever lived, Jesus Himself was an oral prophet. Except when you get to the end of the Bible when He dictates seven letters to seven churches and then He wrote, actually wrote the Scripture. So you've got the writing prophets, you've got the oral prophets.

And then I got to thinking well there is another category, and this is one of my favorites. Sometimes God would speak to the writing prophets, and the oral prophets and he would say, "Stop speaking, stop writing, and start acting." He wanted to get people's attention and he knew that one way to get their attention was to have them start acting. So he spoke to Isaiah one day and said, "Isaiah nobody is paying attention to you. So here's what I want you to do; I want you to go barefoot and naked for three years." Isaiah was the first streaker, you know you are standing there and you're talking and all of a sudden Isaiah comes by. And people said to Isaiah, "What is this?" And Isaiah said, "Well, this is a message from the Lord. And the message is if you do not repent, we have been calling you to repentance if you do not repent the whole nation is going to be stripped barefoot."

The one who was one of the greatest actors was Ezekiel--in fact I don't know if you ever noticed this or not but when God called him to be a prophet God struck him dumb and he could not speak. So, until Jerusalem fell he was a prophet who prophesied by acting. God told him said, "Go out and get a sand pile. I want you to play in a sand pile." And he said, "I want you to take the sand, and I want you to make a little wall of sand. And then I want you to take twigs of a tree and I want you put little twigs all around this wall. And when people come and say, 'What in the

world are you doing playing in the sand pile?' You write on a tablet and you say to them, 'This wall represents the wall around Jerusalem, the twigs represent siege machines. If you don't repent God is going to send armies and they are going to come to this place and they are going to destroy it.'

It was amazing what God asked him to do. On another occasion God said, "Here's what I want you to do." I couldn't have done this he evidently had a lot of hair. He said, "I want you to go to the city square today. I want you to cut off all your hair put it on the ground in a big pile. And then here is what I want you to do, I want you to take one-third of it and I want you to throw it up in the air, let it blow around. I want you to take one-third of it and I want you to burn it. And now take the last third throw it up in the air and take a sword and chop at it." I'm sure by then they called the guys from the funny farm to come get this crazy man. And when they asked him what that meant he wrote down, here's what it means, "If you do not repent this city is going to fall. One-third of you will be destroyed by the fire. One-third of you will be destroyed by the sword. And one-third of you will be taken over the wall into captivity."

He did that over and over. On one occasion the Lord spoke to him and said, "Tomorrow morning you are going to find your wife dead. And when she is dead I just want you to leave her there, I don't want you to prepare her body for burial. I want you to walk off go into the city and start doing your prophetic thing. And when people come to you and say, "Your wife is dead, we found her dead. Why are you out here doing this? Why aren't you attending to her?" I want you to write on a tablet and I want you to tell people this, "That if they do not repent this city is going to fall. And when it falls, it will fall so quickly and so decisively that the living will not be able to take care of the dead." That is just a few of the things he was asked to act out.

Jeremiah was told on one occasion take an ox yoke, put it on your shoulders and walk around with that thing on your shoulders and when they ask you what that's all about say, "It is the will of God for you to surrender and go into captivity." That made him real popular. He was called a traitor, thrown into a pit and almost murdered because they didn't want to hear the message of God.

I think the greatest actor, the one who is going to get the Oscar when all the awards are handed out is going to be Hosea. Hosea who was asked to marry a prostitute and he did. Here was the holiest man in all the land and God said, "Go marry a prostitute." He said, "Well Lord?" He said, "Do it." And he did it. She must have been very beautiful, one person said she must have been very beautiful because he certainly was not attracted to her by her name, her name was Gomer. So he married her, and God said, "Now go preach the message. Preach the message of this marriage." So he went out and he preached all over the land. "You Jews are full of pride and arrogance. You think that God called you as His chosen people because you are better than anybody else. Let me tell you something you are no better than anyone else in all the world. When God called you, you were like a child that had been born and thrown on the side of the road and was lying there in its blood and nobody wanted it. I didn't select you for your beauty. I didn't select you for your intelligence. I didn't select you for any of that. I selected you out of My grace. And you need to put that arrogance aside and you need to repent."

And that wasn't a popular message he was severely mistreated. He comes back home and when he comes home he can't believe, he cannot believe what's happened. He comes back home and he finds out that while he was out preaching his heart out and being persecuted that this wife to whom he had given his good name, his wealth, everything he had that this wife had

suddenly succumbed to her old passions. And she was actually back out on the auction block in the center of town auctioning herself off to the highest bidder. He was crushed. He cried out to God, "God how could you allow this to happen, for my wife to return into prostitution?" And God said, "Go preach the message." And the message was I gave you my good name, I gave you blessing after blessing, after blessing and what did you do? And these are the actual words, you spread your legs to the first person who came along, you are a harlot nation, you are a prostitute nation. You are to repent. You are just like Hosea's wife. So Hosea preached that message and again nobody liked it.

He came back home and when he had preached his heart out he got back home and as he walked up to his door he looked next door, and next door his next door neighbor was on the front porch with a golden idol and he was worshipping and kissing the idol. And Hosea cries out, "Oh, my God men kiss calves." And I think if he were in our nation today and he went all over America today and he were to get up and preach he would say, "Oh, my God, men kiss calves. They kiss power, they kiss CD's in the bank, they kiss fame, and fortune." And he says, "Kiss the Son. Put it all aside and fall in love with the Lord Jesus Christ."

Hosea is a type of Christ in the Old Testament. He went down to that auction block and in front of the entire city he paid the price to buy her out of harlotry. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine him stepping up and everyone mocking him and laughing at him? And he begins to bid and they raise the bid and he bids and he bids until he's paid everything he has to buy her out of harlotry. She didn't deserve it, it was grace. The whole story of Hosea is what grace is all about. But by the grace of God he just bought her out of harlotry. And the story ends there, it doesn't tell us anything else. But it doesn't have to because I guarantee you one thing from that day that woman died she was faithful to him because she could not conceive of such grace that he would forgive her, and forget it, and buy her out of harlotry.

So you've got the writing prophets, you've got the oral prophets, you've got the acting prophets. And then my favorite form of prophecy is symbolic prophecy. The Bible is full of it. You will never love to read the Old Testament until you understand that if you know how to read it you can find Jesus on almost every page because there are so many symbols of Jesus in the Old Testament. There are symbols in events. Every feast in the Jewish calendar is something that points to an agricultural event, to something in the past the giving of the Law. And to something in the future that will be fulfilled by the Messiah. Every event there is prophetic in nature. And then you have people, the Old Testament is full of people who are prophetic in nature, symbolic prophecies.

Take Joseph for example Joseph is probably the greatest of all of the symbolic prophecies in the Old Testament. Joseph delivered a message from God to his kinsman, just as Jesus came to deliver a message of God to the Jewish people. What did his kinsman do? They rejected him; the Jews rejected Jesus. What else did they do to Joseph? They took him and put him into a pit and left him for dead, they tried to kill him. What did the Jewish people do? They killed Jesus along with the Gentiles and others but they killed Him. And then what happened to Joseph? Along came a caravan that pulled him out in a symbolic resurrection just as Jesus was really resurrected. Then what happened? Joseph went into a foreign country just as Jesus went into a foreign country. He's gone to Heaven. And then what happened? Joseph took a Gentile bride. And Jesus is taking a Gentile bride right now. And when He is finished with that Gentile bride He will take the next step that Joseph did; Joseph revealed himself to his brethren and his brethren accepted him. And Jesus will reveal Himself to His brethren and the Jews will look

upon Him whom they pierced and they will weep, and wale, and mourn and they will receive Him as their Hamashiach, as their Messiah. All through the Old Testament you have these prophetic types.

Take David for example, when David was coroneted the king--I mean not coroneted but was anointed to be the king of all of Israel, Saul was still king. David became a king in waiting. Jesus is a King in waiting right now. Jesus came as our Savior, right now He is our High Priest before God. When He returns He will be our king. But He's the anointed King waiting as David waited to come back and reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Even inanimate objects are prophetic symbols. One of the most powerful is the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant was made out of wood which was a symbol that the Messiah would be human. It was overlaid with gold which was a symbol that the Messiah would be divine. It had three objects in it, one of those objects was the Ten Commandments that were given to Moses; and that was a symbol that the Messiah would perfectly fulfill the Law. There was a pot of manna; a symbol that the Messiah would be the Bread of Life. There was the Rod of Aaron that budded which was a symbol that the Messiah would be resurrected from the dead. And over it was what was called the Mercy Seat and once a year the High Priest went in and sprinkled the blood on there to indicate that one day the Messiah would spill His blood to make it possible for the grace of God, and mercy of God to cover the Law of God, and make it possible for us to be reconciled. And on there were two cherubim one on at each end with their wings spread over the Mercy Seat, their wing tips touching and that was where the Shekinah Glory of God dwelled in the Temple.

And when you understand those things it just brings it alive in a way that it never has before. And it also helps you to understand some things in the New Testament that don't seem to be all that important. Let me show you, turn over to John chapter 20 to a passage that we just read and let me show you something very simple there that has profound meaning. John chapter 20 we read this passage a few moments ago, verse 11-12, "Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping; and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain." Seems like a simple historical statement. Mary sticks her head in the tomb, looks over to the burial chamber and sees where the body of Jesus had been lying, and there is an angel at each end. But you see if you understand symbolic prophecy you understand that what Mary really saw when she looked into the tomb she saw the Mercy Seat. Where the blood had been spilled, with a Cherubim at each end, an angel at each end. This was a symbol that the whole meaning of the Ark of the Covenant had been fulfilled in the life, and death, and burial of Jesus Christ.

I believe that's the reason that we are told something very interesting in Jeremiah chapter 3, look at verse 16, Jeremiah 3:16 it's speaking of the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ. "Then it shall come to pass when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days," this is the Millennium, "says the Lord, that they will no more say 'the ark of the covenant of the Lord.' It shall not come to mind nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit, nor shall it be made anymore. At that time Jerusalem should be called the Throne of Yahweh and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of Yahweh. To Jerusalem no more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts." When the Millennial Temple is built there will be no Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. It will be empty, it will not be needed because Jesus will be there and He is the absolute fulfillment of the Ark of the Covenant as our Lord and Savior.

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: Folks, there is simply no way to overemphasize the importance of the Resurrection of Jesus to the Christian faith, for the resurrection of Jesus is the Christian faith. Christianity stands or falls on the validity, the historical reality of the Resurrection. The Resurrection of Jesus is either the greatest event in the history of Mankind, or it is the cruelest hoax that has ever been perpetrated.

The importance of the Resurrection cannot be over emphasized. The apostle Paul puts it this way in 1 Corinthians 15:17 "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless." Peter makes a similar statement in the first chapter of 1 Peter where he says that the Christian hope is based on quote, "the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Based on these statements from Scripture, I don't think it is any exaggeration to say that the resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Christianity stands or falls on the assertion that Jesus rose from the dead.

That's why when Peter preached the first Gospel sermon ever on the Day of Pentecost, the focal point of his message was the Resurrection. He boldly proclaimed: "This Man Jesus of Nazareth, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross, and God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power" In all their preaching and teaching, the apostles focused on the Resurrection as the event that sets Christianity apart from all other world religions. And they were right to do so, Resurrection is the unique stamp of Christianity, for only Christianity claims an empty tomb for its founder. No resurrection has ever been claimed for Abraham, Buddha, Confucius, or Mohammed. Again, as Paul puts it in Romans chapter 1 "Jesus was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." In other words, it is the Resurrection that validates Jesus as God in the flesh.

Closing

Dr. Reagan: Well folks, that's our program for this week. I hope it has been a blessing to you. Until next week, the Lord willing, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries, saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our Redemption is drawing near.

End of Program